

Separation Anxiety

Saying goodbye at the gates can be tricky for some children but try not to worry, it is perfectly natural, – below are some ideas to help you.
Be aware that your child may be both anxious at leaving you and excited when returning to school after the holidays or a period of being unwell.

Getting back into routines: routines will help to make it easier for children to return to school. Routines provide distraction and structure.

Have a consistent morning routine: get up, brush teeth, wash, get dressed, make bed, have breakfast.

Start talking about school: exciting things to learn, people to see, games to play.
Buy uniform and other clothes together, try it on and show it off. Ask what your child is thinking and feeling.

Be prepared for anxious partings on the first days back: get yourself ready emotionally, but keep it quick and simple - a hug and three kisses, a goodbye and see you at pick up time.

Bring bedtime forward by 15 minutes each evening - build in wind down time or a 15 minute countdown to bring games or TV programmes to an end, turn off or bring electronic devices downstairs.

Have a consistent bedtime routine: pack away toys and games ("tidy up time"), let your child choose their pjs and get them ready before moving onto teeth, settling time (reading), dim lights, devices on charge downstairs, hugs and kisses - lots of praise for sticking to the routine and gently reminding if they forget.

Sit down to family meals - to bond, talk over the day, and prepare for the next day.

Get yourself ready - think of a quick and simple farewell routine - a hug, three kisses and a goodbye wave or blown kiss.

Let children know where you will be - "I'll be ... at work, at home, going shopping, getting dinner ready, working on the garden today whilst you are playing with your friends!"

Explain when you will see them again - for children who cannot tell time, you might say, "I'll be here just after story time" (or other end of day activity) or "I'll be waiting for you at 3pm. I'll want to hear all about your day!"

The farewell routine may be shaky the first week, but it should improve with consistency.

Tips and tricks

If the goodbyes with your child seem to be taking a long time – be patient. You have spent a huge amount of quality time together during the school holidays.

It may help to give your child something called a "transition object" – something that belongs to you, that the child can have nearby and touch or speak to when you are away.

Love hearts

Draw a love heart on your hand and one on your child's hand. When they feel they need you, they can touch the love heart. You can then tell each other that you were thinking about them today by touching your love heart.  **Love buttons**

You might want to sew a button into the inside of a jumper/cardigan that your child can touch throughout the day for comfort.

A special item

You might have a key ring, hair band or some other small item that is special to you, which they can keep with them or near them during the day.